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**Wai 3325, #A80(c)**

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| **IN THE WAITANGI TRIBUNAL** | **WAI 3325**<br>**WAI 3286** |
| **CONCERNING** | the Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975 |
| **AND**<br>**IN THE MATTER OF** | The Climate Change Priority Inquiry |
| **AND**<br>**IN THE MATTER OF** | A claim by Tui Aroha Warmenhoven on behalf of herself as Trustee and Chair of Umuariki Marae and members of Ngāti Rangi Hapū and Te Whānau a Umuariki Hapū of Ngāti Uepōhatu Iwi of Ruatoria |

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**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS OF DR SHAUN AWATERE**

**Dated this 22nd day of October 2025**

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**Contents**

## Introduction

1. The following provides answers to questions that were asked of me by members of the Waitangi Tribunal Panel, Matua Kevin Prime and Mr Basil Morrison, following the presentation of my Brief of Evidence dated 6 May 2025[1] during Hearing Week Four.

**What is place-based authority, the "Going with the Grain" approach of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment and how could that provide a mixed toolbox for sedimentation/erosion?**

2. During my presentation of evidence, I favoured place-based authority model, the "Going with the Grain" approach of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment and set out further here how that could that provide a mixed toolbox for sedimentation/erosion

3. The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment (PCE) has emphasised that durable land-use change depends on policy tools that "go with the grain" of local conditions, combining regulation, finance, and information in ways that reflect the natural and social character of place.[2]

4. A co-governed toolbox, as proposed here, directly operationalises that principle.

5. By blending statutory rules with performance-based instruments, financial incentives, and tikanga-based decision-making, the framework ensures that environmental responsibility is shared across all parties while authority is exercised in accordance with Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

6. Such an approach avoids the inefficiencies of fragmented regulation by integrating local ecological knowledge with state policy levers.

7. In practice, this means that funding, compliance, and planning decisions are guided by both scientific evidence and the customary values of mana whenua.

[1] Brief of Evidence of Shaun Awatere, Wai 3325, #A80.
[2] Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment. (2024, May 22). Going with the grain: Changing land uses to fit a changing landscape. Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment. https://pce.parliament.nz/publications/going-with-the-grain-changing-land-uses-to-fit-a-changing-landscape.

8. The result is an adaptive governance system capable of addressing complex erosion and sedimentation challenges while strengthening local stewardship and accountability. In doing so, it restores a measure of balance between economic development and the protection of cultural and ecological values that underpin community wellbeing in Te Tairāwhiti.

9. Co-governance at the catchment scale with hapū and iwi as decision-makers provides a framework for managing erosion and sedimentation risks in a manner consistent with Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

10. Within this model, hapū and iwi exercise authority over "very-high" and "high" erosion-risk zones reflecting their proximity to the consequences of poor-land use practices.

11. This approach enables decision-making to be grounded in tikanga-based priorities such as rāhui to protect vulnerable areas, the establishment of native transition corridors to stabilise steep terrain, and the use of riparian and wetland buffers that prevent sediment from entering waterways.

12. It also ensures that culturally significant sites such as urupā and marae are protected through clearly defined protection lines. In operational terms, such co-governance arrangements allow for integrated land-use planning that aligns regulatory mechanisms with mātauranga Māori and local ecological knowledge.

13. My initial Brief of Evidence documents both the very high concentration of 'red-zone' erosion land within Te Tairāwhiti and the vulnerability of Māori communities downstream of clear-fell forestry.[3]

14. Establishing a stricter, place-based regime could employ "stop-go" rules, consent gateways, and contingency plans designed to prevent further degradation of high-risk slopes and to manage downstream impacts more effectively.

15. These mechanisms would enable proactive intervention before catastrophic sediment mobilization occurs. Importantly, this approach

[3] Brief of Evidence of Shaun Awatere, above n 1, at [38].

recognises that conventional regulatory tools have failed to prevent recurring damage to Māori land and infrastructure.

**Regulatory settings and land-use regimes**

16. In the near term, revised rule settings are required to immediately halt clear-felling on red and orange terrain within the Erosion Susceptibility Classification (ESC) framework.

17. These areas are scientifically recognised as highly prone to mass movement, including slips and debris avalanches, particularly following intense rainfall events.

18. **Retaining riparian setbacks** that remain intact through harvest operations is critical to maintaining bank stability and filtering sediment before it reaches waterways.

19. Likewise, **adopting staged or native transition harvesting** on steep land offers a practical pathway to reduce erosion while supporting biodiversity recovery.

20. These measures are consistent with my earlier exhibits to the Tairāwhiti Land Use Inquiry which emphasised that incremental and locally tailored transitions deliver better long-term results than abrupt regulatory prohibitions[4].

21. **Immediate cessation of clear-fell operations** in the highest-risk terrain, coupled with managed native reforestation, provides a credible starting point for risk-reduction.

22. The introduction of **performance-based bonds** or levies on high-risk harvest operations would establish a mechanism for internalising the true environmental and social costs of steep-land forestry.

23. These instruments would ensure that those who derive the economic benefit from land use that generates sediment and debris are also financially responsible for the resulting clean-up and remediation.

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[4] Awatere S et al. (2023) *Brief to Mana Taiao Tairāwhiti to support with Tairāwhiti Land Use Inquiry* Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research.

24. Such a framework mirrors the polluter-pays logic embedded in the Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) where economic actors are required to bear the marginal costs of the risks they impose on others.

25. By requiring operators to post a performance bond or pay a risk-adjusted levy before harvest consent is granted, councils and co-governance bodies could create a dedicated fund to support rapid-response clean ups and woody debris retrieval following severe storm events.

26. This system would reduce the burden currently carried by local authorities, iwi and affected communities who are often left to manage and pay for post-storm damage.

27. Performance-based instruments also incentivise better forestry practice, as operators who maintain compliance and avoid damage can recover their bond or qualify for lower levies in subsequent harvest cycles.

28. In this way, financial accountability is directly tied to environmental performance and the protection of downstream communities.

29. **Sediment reduction contracts** and **results-based grants** provide an effective complementary tool to regulatory interventions by directly rewarding measurable environmental improvements.

30. Under such mechanisms, landowners and collectives would receive payment for verified tonnes of sediment avoided through actions such as fencing, re-vegetation, gully stabilisation, and wetland reinstatement.

31. This outcome-based model aligns with the "Going with the Grain" approach advocated by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment (PCE), which emphasises tailoring land-use change to the natural character and capacity of each landscape.[5]

32. By combining local mātauranga with fine-grained spatial data, co-governance authorities can target investment where it delivers the most significant environmental returns.

[5] Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment. (2024, May 22). Going with the grain: Changing land uses to fit a changing landscape, above n 2.

33. Importantly, this approach moves beyond one-size-fits-all regulation toward place-specific partnerships that recognise both ecological variability and social equity. It also leverages blended finance, drawing on both public and private funding sources to share costs and incentivise sustained practice change.

34. In essence, results-based funding mechanisms operationalise the principle that those who deliver measurable sediment and biodiversity benefits should be directly rewarded, reinforcing accountability while empowering local communities to restore their own catchments.

35. The establishment of **compulsory harvest-area insurance** or the imposition of **risk-adjusted consent fees** for steep terrain would ensure that forestry and land-use operators bear a proportionate share of the financial risk associated with erosion-prone landscapes.

36. Premiums or fees would be calibrated to the ESC class of each site, as well as to the downstream exposure of marae, urupā, and other wāhi tapu located along vulnerable river systems.

37. This risk-weighted approach would internalise the costs of potential damage, thereby creating a direct economic incentive for landowners and operators to adopt less hazardous land-use practices.

38. It would also embed an equity lens consistent with my earlier evidence addressing the historical burden of environmental risk borne by Ngāti Uepōhatu and other hapū in Te Tairāwhiti.

39. For too long, the externalities of forestry operations—such as sedimentation, debris flows, and infrastructure damage—have been absorbed by communities with limited capacity to recover.

40. **Risk-adjusted consent frameworks** would begin to redress this imbalance by linking financial responsibility to environmental risk, aligning economic behaviour with the principle of kaitiakitanga and the practical realities of climate-exposed terrain.

41. The use of **targeted rates or consent rebates** for landowners who commit to binding native transition plans within red and orange erosion

zones would provide a constructive economic signal to support the non-market shift toward sustainable land use.

42. These financial incentives would recognise the public benefits of native reforestation, such as reduced sedimentation, improved water quality, and enhanced biodiversity, while acknowledging that private landowners often face significant short-term costs in making such transitions.

43. By offering rate relief or rebates on consent fees, councils and co-governance bodies can help lower the financial barriers that currently discourage voluntary uptake.

**What are biodiversity-credits and how can they fund Indigenous restoration in Te Tairāwhiti?**

44. A biodiversity credit system (BCS) provides a structured market mechanism through which measurable and verifiable units of indigenous biodiversity protection, enhancement, or restoration can be issued, traded, and retired.

45. Such a system enables both public and private investment to flow into projects that deliver tangible ecological outcomes, complementing rather than replacing existing regulatory obligations.

46. Under this model, credits would represent quantifiable improvements, such as hectares of restored native habitat, kilometres of riparian planting, or verified increases in native species presence that are certified through transparent methodologies.

47. Importantly, the BCS model creates a framework in which the environmental, cultural, and social values of restoration are recognised in economic terms, allowing investors and landowners to participate in conservation financing.

48. This mechanism is particularly relevant to Te Tairāwhiti, where significant opportunities exist to align market-based incentives with hapū and iwi-led restoration objectives.

49. By establishing a system that monetises positive ecological outcomes, the BCS offers a sustainable pathway to scale up native restoration efforts

across erosion-prone catchments, in a way that reflects both mātauranga Māori and contemporary environmental economics.

50. The Ministry for the Environment's discussion document on biodiversity credits explicitly acknowledges the significance of Te Tiriti o Waitangi in shaping the design and governance of such systems.[6]

51. It recognises that biodiversity credit frameworks must not only incentivise ecological restoration but also uphold the rights and responsibilities of mana whenua as kaitiaki of their ancestral lands.

52. In Te Tairāwhiti, where large tracts of whenua Māori retain indigenous vegetation and where hapū and iwi possess extensive ecological and cultural knowledge, a well-structured BCS offers a means to mobilise finance for restoration under Māori authority.

53. Such an approach provides an avenue for mātauranga Māori-guided projects, such as native forest regeneration, wetland enhancement, and riparian planting—to be properly valued and scaled.

54. This alignment between economic mechanisms and tikanga-based stewardship would enable Māori landowners to restore degraded landscapes without further alienating land or relying solely on external subsidies.

55. In doing so, the BCS framework could help redress long-standing structural barriers that have limited Māori participation in conservation finance, while supporting local employment, intergenerational skill development, and the re-establishment of ecological integrity across ancestral territories.

56. The capacity to **"stack" or "staple" biodiversity credits with carbon units** represents a significant innovation in the financing of native ecosystem restoration.

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[6] Ministry for the Environment. (2023, July). Helping nature and people thrive: Exploring a biodiversity credit system for Aotearoa New Zealand—Discussion document (ME 1777). Ministry for the Environment. https://environment.govt.nz/assets/publications/biodiversity/Biodiversity-credit-system-discussion-document.pdf.

57. Stacking refers to the ability to generate multiple types of credits, such as carbon sequestration and biodiversity enhancement from a single project where both outcomes can be verified independently.

58. Stapling, by contrast, allows complementary credits to be sold together, improving project viability by creating bundled revenue streams.

59. This dual-credit approach is particularly relevant to Te Tairāwhiti's steep, erosion-prone landscapes, where native reforestation serves both climate mitigation and sediment control objectives.

60. By enabling landowners to combine biodiversity and carbon benefits, the economic feasibility of native transition is materially improved compared to exotic replanting or single-purpose forestry.

61. Moreover, such financial structures align with co-governance principles by valuing the full range of ecological services delivered by indigenous ecosystems: carbon storage, soil stabilisation, water purification, and cultural restoration.

62. In this sense, credit stacking not only advances economic efficiency but also reflects a holistic worldview in which environmental, cultural, and spiritual wellbeing are interdependent and mutually reinforcing.

63. The scope of a biodiversity credit system should extend **across terrestrial, freshwater, estuarine, and coastal ecosystems** to capture the interconnected nature of Te Tairāwhiti's environmental challenges.

64. Sediment generated from upland forestry operations and eroding slopes ultimately impacts lowland wetlands, river estuaries, and nearshore marine environments.

65. A credit framework that recognises these linkages allows restoration activities such as wetland re-establishment, riparian planting, dune stabilisation, and seagrass recovery to be funded and valued as part of an integrated catchment-to-coast strategy.

66. This whole-of-system approach aligns with customary Māori understandings of environmental interdependence, where land (whenua), water (wai), and sea (moana) are regarded as parts of a single living

system. By incorporating multiple habitat types into the crediting system, it becomes possible to design projects that achieve cumulative benefits across ecosystem boundaries, including reductions in sediment load to the coast.

67. Such an approach ensures that biodiversity credits support not only site-specific restoration but also the wider ecological connectivity and resilience that underpin sustainable catchment management.

68. In doing so, it advances both scientific best practice and the tikanga principle of whanaungatanga, the maintenance of relationships between all elements of the environment.

69. Integrity, permanence, and transparency are essential to the credibility of any biodiversity credit system.

70. Credits must be grounded in outcome-based methodologies that measure real, additional, and lasting ecological improvements.

71. Permanence periods should reflect the natural growth cycles and stabilisation timeframes of native ecosystems such as the decades required for mature indigenous forests to establish or for restored wetlands to reach hydrological balance.

72. Guardrails against double counting, leakage, and speculative trading are critical to ensuring that each credit represents a genuine environmental gain that would not have occurred in the absence of the project.

73. These principles align with international standards emerging in biodiversity markets and with the guidance provided in the Ministry for the Environment’s discussion paper on biodiversity credits.[7]

74. Applying these integrity frameworks within a Te Tairāwhiti context would also require embedding tikanga-based verification processes, whereby hapū and iwi confirm that projects deliver both ecological outcomes and cultural benefits.

75. Such dual accountability to science and to mātauranga Māori, ensures that the system maintains its legitimacy across regulatory, market, and

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[7] IBID.

community domains, fostering investor confidence while upholding the mana of local kaitiaki.

76. Central to the integrity and success of a biodiversity credit system in Aotearoa New Zealand is the leadership of mana whenua in both governance and implementation.

77. Projects that generate biodiversity credits should be developed and endorsed through hapū and iwi-led planning processes, ensuring that design, monitoring, and benefit-sharing arrangements reflect local tikanga and the aspirations of mana whenua.

78. This requirement gives practical effect to the principles of partnership and active protection under Te Tiriti o Waitangi. In Te Tairāwhiti, where many biodiversity restoration opportunities occur on or adjacent to whenua Māori, such leadership is essential to ensure equitable participation in emerging environmental markets.

79. It also provides a vehicle for intergenerational capability building, enabling local whānau to develop expertise in ecological monitoring, carbon accounting, and environmental finance.

80. Requiring Māori endorsement and co-governance of biodiversity credit projects aligns closely with the implementation needs of the National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity (NPS-IB), particularly in supporting the protection and enhancement of indigenous ecosystems on Māori land.

81. In this way, the biodiversity credit system can serve as both a funding mechanism and a policy delivery tool that reinforces tino rangatiratanga and supports community-led restoration at scale.

82. The success of a biodiversity credit market in its formative years will depend on the establishment of a strong public sector finance anchor to provide stability, credibility, and demand certainty.

83. In practical terms, this means enabling Crown agencies, regional councils, and public entities to act as cornerstone purchasers of biodiversity credits from accredited Te Tairāwhiti projects.

84. Multi-year contracts for credit purchase would de-risk early-stage investment, signal government confidence, and attract complementary private capital.

**What is the Raukūmara Pae Maunga Restoration programme and what is it's current status?**

85. The Raukūmara Pae Maunga programme was established in 2020, in partnership between Ngāti Porou, Te Whānau a Apanui and Te Papa Atawhai (the Department of Conservation), with the intention of restoring the mana and mauri of te Raukūmara, to thrive, flourish and nurture all who are connected to it.[8]

86. The Raukūmara comprises approximately 153,000 hectares of rugged, wild mountainous landscape. The area includes 115,000 hectares of Crown Public Conservation Estate, and the remainder is Ngā Whenua Rāhui estate owned by Māori trusts or incorporations.[9]

**Figure 1:** Map of The Raukūmara Forest, Predator Free NZ[10]

[8] Raukūmara Pae Maunga, Vision and Values https://www.raukumara.org.nz/vision-and-values
[9] Wai 3325, #A098, Brief of Evidence of Tui Warmenhoven dated 16 May 2025 at [43].
[10] https://predatorfreenz.org/stories/things-you-should-know/thriving-garden-to-empty-shell-why-apu/

87. The objectives of the Raukūmara Pae Maunga are to:[11]

a. **Restore: Habitat Recovery**

i. Support inter-agency control of goats within public conservation lands;

ii. Achieve a long-term goal of zero goats within public conservation lands;

iii. Reduce the level of deer within public conservation lands to a level that permits understory recovery;

iv. Monitor understory recovery across habitats within the Raukūmara;

v. Reduce the levels of possums to below five percent across public conservation land and the partnering owners' land;

vi. Monitor canopy recovery across habitats within the Raukūmara;

vii. Plan, establish and maintain at least two intensively managed restoration sites; and

viii. Utilise mātauranga Māori and conventional conservation and scientific understandings and practices in all aspects of the project work.

b. **Protect: Predator Control**

i. Reduce and maintain rat and mustelid populations to low levels across public conservation lands and intensively managed sites; and

ii. Monitor rat and mustelid populations and their impacts on key native species.

c. **Recover: Ecological and Species Recovery**

[11] Raukūmara Pae Maunga, Objectives https://www.raukumara.org.nz/objectives.

i. Initiate the recovery of habitats, threatened species populations and improve ecological functions through landscape-scale, multi-species pest control;

ii. Undertake holistic, mātauranga-grounded monitoring of species, habits and the wider ngāhere; and

iii. Utilise insight from monitoring to inform operational decision-making.

d. **Resilience: Connected, healthy, strong kaitiaki and communities**

i. By initiating and demonstrating landscape-scale ecological and environmental improvements across the Raukūmara forest, significant cultural, social and economic benefits will occur, including: local job creation, experiential learning opportunities for kura and communities, strengthening pathways to work, providing culturally grounded kaitiaki opportunities for iwi members and the chance to reconnect to the Raukūmara in a variety of meaningful ways.

**Programmes**

88. To achieve the above objectives, Raukūmara Pae Maunga has a number of programmes in place in the areas of monitoring, 1080, deer and goat control, intensively managed sites, and engagement.[12]

*Monitoring*

89. The monitoring programme provides an integrated knowledge platform to support the restoration of the ngāhere.

90. Understanding what is happening in the ngāhere is critical to its restoration, but in the earliest phases of this project, monitoring was found to be severely limited in scope, scale and detail. Data was out of date, with habitat information being more than thirty years old and not taking

[12] Te Raukūmara Pae Maunga, Operations https://www.raukumara.org.nz/operations.

into account recent and large-scale deer and possum impacts. It also lacked any foundation in mātauranga Māori.

91. As a result of these limitations, a provisional monitoring programme has been put in place to provide an integrated knowledge platform to support the restoration of the ngāhere.

92. This approach integrates Māori world views, values, priorities and mātauranga Māori, as well as mainstream assumptions and approaches to conservation monitoring.

*1080*

93. The Raukūmara Pae Maunga runs the largest aerial 1080 operation in the North Island, as the quickest, most efficient tool available with the greatest likelihood of being able to save the ngāhere.

*Deer and Goat*

94. Reducing numbers of deer and goat to an extremely low level is required to allow the regeneration of the understory.

95. The Raukumara Pae Maunga has undertaken a high intensity deer and goat control programme with the aim of reducing populations to low levels within four years, using a mixture of aerial techniques (such as conventional and thermal) and ground-based hunting across 70 per cent of the Raukūmara Conservation Park.

*Intensively Managed Sites*

96. Intensively Managed Sites (IMS) help people to understand the crisis the ngāhere faces.

97. IMS are set up in places where whānau can see, watch, learn and be involved in a hands-on, practical way, without being far from home.

98. Each IMS is an area that is sectioned off, and intensive management strategies are applied. Some sites might focus on critical aspects of predator control such as traps, bait, trap shyness, seasonal considerations and long-term sustained suppression strategies; while

others might focus on monitoring, or the return of taonga bird and lizard species; or a combination of different aspects of mahi.

*Engagement*

99. The iwi who are kaitiaki to this rohe are central to the recovery of te Raukūmara. Haukāinga are integral to the success of this kaupapa: they determine the tikanga, set the tone and keep everyone safe.

100. The story of the ngāhere needs to be told, firstly for ngā iwi o te Raukūmara, and after that, for everyone else. Whānau with proximity, experience, mana and mātauranga as well as tohu and qualifications lead the programme. After this, the programme draws on external support.

**Government support for the programme**

101. In August 2020, $34 million was awarded to the programme for a five year period.[13]

102. On 30 September 2025, the government announced a further $6 million investment into the Raukūmara Pae Maunga over the next three years.[14]

103. However, Ora Barlow, Governance Manager, recently noted in an article by Radio New Zealand that this funding was just part of what Raukūmara Pae Maunga needed to continue. The next steps for Raukūmara Pae Maunga are to secure long-term funding partnerships, expand restoration efforts and grow a skilled ecological resources.[15]

[13] Wai 3325, #A098, above n 2, at [64].
[14] Beehive, Press Release 'Backing Iwi-led biodiversity protection' https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/backing-iwi-led-biodiversity-protection.
[15] RNZ, 'Iwi-led convservation project Raukūmara Pae Maunga awarded $6m funding boost' https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/te-manu-korihi/574577/iwi-led-conservation-project-raukumara-pae-maunga-awarded-6m-funding-boost.

**How does the Raukūmara Pae Maunga programme compare to the Kaipara Moana Remediation programme (KMR) and how can it provide an institutional template?**

104. The Kaipara Moana Remediation (KMR) programme provides a proven institutional model for implementing **large-scale, co-governed environmental restoration** in Aotearoa New Zealand.

105. Its governance structure is founded on an equal partnership between Kaipara Uri (the collective of mana whenua) and local government, operating under a formal Memorandum of Understanding that defines shared decision-making authority.[16]

106. This arrangement gives practical effect to the exercise of tino rangatiratanga and kāwanatanga operating in balance within a single institutional framework.

107. The Joint Committee established under KMR demonstrates how Treaty partnership can be embedded not as an advisory feature but as a central decision-making function.

108. This model allows for strategic direction and prioritisation to be determined collaboratively, ensuring that actions undertaken across the catchment reflect both scientific evidence and tikanga-based values.

109. The Kaipara experience shows that when mana whenua and local authorities share authority and accountability, environmental remediation is not only accelerated but delivered with greater legitimacy and community buy-in.

110. It therefore provides a template for replication in Te Tairāwhiti, where the challenges of sedimentation, biodiversity loss, and community vulnerability demand coordinated and enduring governance solutions.

111. The KMR programme is distinguished by its **long-horizon, multi-source financing model**, which ensures both the continuity and scale required for meaningful environmental restoration.

[16] Kaipara Moana Remediation Joint Committee. (2020). Kaipara Moana Remediation: Memorandum of understanding. https://kmr.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/2020201009_Kaipara-Moana-Remediation_Memorandum-of-Understanding.pdf (Kaipara Moana Remediation).

112. The ten-year, $200 million programme combines contributions from multiple partners, $100 million from the Crown through the Jobs for Nature initiative, $10 million each from Auckland and Northland Regional Councils, and approximately $80 million in co-investment from landowners, industry groups, and community participants, both in cash and in-kind.[17]

113. This diversified funding base provides financial resilience and demonstrates how public, private, and community resources can be aligned to achieve common ecological outcomes.

114. The decade-long timeframe reflects an understanding that sediment reduction, riparian restoration, and land-use transformation are generational undertakings that require consistent investment to deliver lasting results.

115. Importantly, this structure institutionalises co-investment as a principle of partnership: those who derive environmental, social, or economic benefits from the restoration of the moana are also contributors to its recovery.

116. Such an approach directly contrasts with short-term, grant-based programmes that tend to prioritise immediate outputs over sustained outcomes. For Te Tairāwhiti, adopting a similarly long-term, co-funded model would provide the financial stability necessary to drive native reforestation and sediment control across high-risk catchments while embedding co-governance and community participation at every level.

117. The KMR programme is guided by a clear and measurable objective: to halve the amount of sediment entering the Kaipara Harbour within a decade.

118. This goal provides a concrete benchmark against which progress can be evaluated and ensures that all participating entities, from central government and councils to landowners and hapū, work toward a shared outcome.

[17] Kaipara Moana Remediation. (n.d.). Funding.https://kmr.org.nz/funding/ (Kaipara Moana Remediation).

119. To achieve this, the programme funds a suite of targeted interventions, including fencing of waterways, wetland restoration, riparian planting, and native forest regeneration.[18]

120. These activities are supported through two complementary funding streams: the Landowner Grants programme and the Whenua Whānui Fund, which provides resources specifically for hapū, marae, and collective projects.

121. To date, more than 735 individual landowners and over 75 community and marae-based groups have participated, illustrating both the breadth of engagement and the scalability of the model.

122. In combining technical interventions with local stewardship, the KMR programme demonstrates how co-governed institutions can achieve both ecological restoration and social cohesion.

123. The model thus provides valuable insights for Te Tairāwhiti, where measurable sediment reduction targets and transparent accountability mechanisms are equally essential to rebuilding trust and achieving durable change.

124. The KMR programme builds on more than 25 years of integrated catchment management experience through the Integrated Kaipara Harbour Management Group (IKHMG), demonstrating how localised initiatives can be scaled into a robust institutional framework.

125. This long-standing foundation of collaboration between mana whenua, government agencies, and communities has enabled KMR to develop sophisticated systems for procurement, contracting, monitoring, and verification systems that ensure both accountability and adaptability over time.

126. The programme illustrates how enduring relationships and shared governance can generate cumulative learning, with data-driven insights feeding back into improved practice across multiple sub-catchments.

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[18] Kaipara Moana Remediation. (2023, July). Whenua Whānui Fund—Information sheet. https://kmr.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/154.030-Whenua-Whanui-Fund-Information-Sheet-July23.1.pdf (Kaipara Moana Remediation).

**Concluding Statement – Equity and Partnership**

127. Te Tiriti-consistent adaptation requires that decision-making authority and resource allocation follow the principles of equity, accountability, and proximity to impact.

128. In practical terms, this means that those most exposed to environmental risk—particularly hapū and iwi whose communities and assets lie downstream of steep erosion-prone terrain must hold meaningful decision rights in the management of those risks.

129. The principle that "decision-rights follow exposure" recognises that local communities possess both the deepest knowledge of place and the greatest stake in its recovery.

130. Similarly, the principle that "funding follows place-based priorities" ensures that financial investment is directed to where it will achieve the greatest ecological and cultural return.

131. Together, these principles establish a framework for adaptive governance that aligns with both Te Tiriti obligations and contemporary environmental management best practice.

132. Within the Te Tairāwhiti context, where the cumulative effects of steep-land forestry, intensified rainfall, and inadequate infrastructure have disproportionately affected Māori communities, equity in governance and resource distribution is not simply desirable but essential.

133. A co-governed model, underpinned by these principles, would rebalance authority and responsibility in a way that restores mana, builds resilience, and ensures that adaptation strategies reflect both local priorities and national commitments to environmental justice.

134. The evidence demonstrates that Te Tairāwhiti faces a convergence of extreme erosion risk and increasingly severe storm events, both of which amplify the vulnerability of downstream Māori communities.

135. The continuation of steep-land clear-felling under current land-use regimes externalises environmental risk onto these communities, which often lack the financial and infrastructural capacity to recover from repeated damage.

136. Flooding, sediment inundation, and woody debris flows have had direct consequences for marae, papakāinga, and wāhi tapu, compounding historical patterns of land alienation and environmental degradation.

137. In this context, the existing regulatory framework can no longer be considered fit for purpose.

138. It privileges short-term economic return over long-term landscape stability and fails to account for the disproportionate distribution of environmental costs.

139. A shift toward co-governed, place-based management, where hapū and iwi exercise authority commensurate with their exposure to risk is therefore both an equity imperative and an environmental necessity.

140. Such reform would enable Māori communities not only to protect their whenua and taonga but to lead the design of adaptive responses that reflect local values, customary practice, and intergenerational responsibility.

141. The proposed co-governed toolbox—combining rule changes, performance-based bonds, results-based grants, and a hapū/iwi-led biodiversity credits market, is both feasible and well-precedented within Aotearoa New Zealand's environmental governance landscape.

142. Evidence from existing programmes, such as the Kaipara Moana Remediation, confirms that joint decision-making and shared accountability between mana whenua and the Crown can deliver measurable environmental improvements at scale.

143. The framework I have outlined does not depend on creating new institutions but on repurposing and integrating existing mechanisms—planning instruments under the Resource Management Act, regional council funding tools, and emerging biodiversity market frameworks, within a co-governance structure.

144. This model allows regulatory authority to be exercised in partnership with local knowledge holders, ensuring that interventions are both scientifically grounded and socially legitimate.

145. Moreover, it provides flexibility to adapt to differing catchment conditions, allowing rules and incentives to evolve in response to verified outcomes. By embedding equity and partnership at the core of this system, Te Tairāwhiti can move beyond ad hoc policy responses toward a durable, evidence-based model of land and water management that honours Te Tiriti o Waitangi and secures long-term community and ecological resilience.

DATED this 22nd day of October 2025

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Dr Shaun Awatere